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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/049,431	02/12/2002	Georg Berceli	100564-00094	3687

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Arent Fox Kintner
Plotkin & Kahn
Suite 600
1050 Connecticut Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036-5339

EXAMINER

RODRIGUEZ, JOSEPH C

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3653

DATE MAILED: 02/26/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/049,431

Applicant(s)

BERCELI, GEORG

Examiner

Joseph C Rodriguez

Art Unit

3653

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-3,6 and 7 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-3,6 and 7 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 12 February 2002 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☒ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on ____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
 3. ☒ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☒ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 3.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: ____.

DETAILED ACTION

Drawings

The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a). The drawings must show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Therefore, the guide rails (claim 6) must be shown or the feature(s) canceled from the claim(s). No new matter should be entered.

Further, figure 1 should be amended to eliminate the non-English reference headings.

A proposed drawing correction or corrected drawings are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The objection to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Specification

The disclosure is objected to as lacking appropriate section headings as outlined in 37 CFR 1.77. See also 37 CFR 1.72-1.77; MPEP § 608.01(a). Correction is required.

This application does not contain an abstract of the disclosure as required by 37 CFR 1.72(b). An abstract on a separate sheet is required.

Claim Objections

The claims are objected to as the form of claims 1-3 and 6-7 is improper. Where a claim sets forth a plurality of elements or steps, as in the instant claims, each element

or step should be separated by a line indentation. See MPEP 608.01(m) and 37 CFR 1.75(i).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

Claims 1-3 and 6-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Regarding claims 1-3, Examiner recommends changing the European style claim language into standard U.S. PTO claim language by using transitional language such as "comprising" or "consisting of" to clearly indicate the features of the claimed invention. Without this transitional language, as in claim 1, it is unclear whether features are merely part of the preamble or are part of the claimed invention.

Further, in claim 1, the language "either first all" (ln. 23), "first all the objects" (ln. 26), "maintaining the relevant...sorting step" (ln. 28-34) is nonsensical and thus indefinite.

Claim 1 recites the limitation "the sorting criterion" (ln. 8-9). There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim.

Regarding claim 6, the phrases "in particular" (ln. 4) and "preferably" (ln. 7 from top) render the claim indefinite because it is unclear whether the limitations following these phrases are part of the claimed invention. See MPEP § 2173.05(d).

Further, in claim 3, the language "second destination storage area a respective sorting step" (bottom of p. 1- top of p. 2 of Preliminary Amendment) and "maintaining the relevant source...sorting step" (ln. 3 from top to end of claim) is nonsensical and thus indefinite.

Examiner recommends carefully reviewing the claims and amending the claims to provide proper antecedent basis and to eliminate nonsensical language.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1 and 6-7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Smith et al. ("Smith")(US '814).

Smith teaches a method and device for sorting a group of objects (Fig. 1-8) wherein a binary representation of the sorting criterion (col. 15, ln. 20 et seq.) is used to sort objects in multiple passes based on a significant digit (Abstract). Here, the plurality of sorting rails (Fig. 1, 8, near 32, 258, 268) can be regarded as the respective conveying paths and storage sections (i.e., conveying circuits) and the switches (near 30, 40, 266, 277) as the diverters. Further, the claimed device features not cited above are clearly depicted in figures 1 and 8.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 2-3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Smith in view of Hart (US '122).

Smith as set forth above teaches all that is claimed except for expressly teaching the forming of sub-groups and the later rejoining of said sub-groups. Hart, however, teaches an object sorting method that utilizes the formation of sub-groups (Abstract). Moreover, this feature simplifies the complex conveyor system and allows for a wider variety of selection criteria (col. 1, ln. 55 et seq.). Therefore, it would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to modify the invention of Smith as taught above.

Conclusion

Any references not explicitly discussed above but made of record are considered relevant to the prosecution of the instant application.

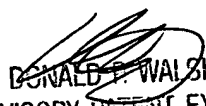
Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Joseph C Rodriguez whose telephone number is 703-308-8342. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F during business hours, with alternate Mondays off.

Art Unit: 3653

The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-306-4195.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is 703-308-1113.

February 20, 2003


DONALD P. WALSH
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 3600